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## Research Article

# The Role of Union Parishad in Rural Dispute Resolution: A Case Study

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**Abstract.** The Union Parishad, a century-old local institution in Bangladesh, has long served as a key service delivery body founded and operated by rural residents. To make local justice more accessible, the Village Court system was introduced in the mid-1970s to strengthen *Shalish*, the traditional informal justice mechanism. These courts offered an alternative to the lengthy and expensive formal judicial process. However, over time, poor performance and weak institutional capacity reduced their significance. To revitalize them, the Government of Bangladesh, with support from the European Union and UNDP, launched the “Activating Village Courts Project,” which has improved their effectiveness and accessibility. Despite challenges such as weak record-keeping, limited staff capacity, and low public awareness, Village Courts play an essential role in resolving rural disputes, maintaining peace, and reducing the burden on formal courts. Governed by the Village Court Act of 2006, they protect rural citizens from the complexities of the formal justice system. Strengthening these courts requires expanding their jurisdiction, improving training, increasing oversight, and enhancing public

awareness through government and NGO initiatives. With sustained support and nationwide expansion of successful initiatives, Village Courts can become a practical and credible alternative for rural justice in Bangladesh.

**Keywords:** Village court, Local dispute, resolution, justice system, Bangladesh

## INTRODUCTION

Rural communities in Bangladesh are often confronted with disputes involving land ownership, family issues, business transactions, and various social conflicts that, if left unresolved, can escalate into larger tensions, threatening community harmony and stability (Hossan et al., 2024). Given the limited access to formal judicial systems due to economic, logistical, and procedural barriers, rural populations frequently rely on alternative dispute resolution mechanisms. The Union Parishad, as the lowest tier of local government in Bangladesh, plays a crucial role in maintaining order and justice at the grassroots level through its Village Courts. These Village Courts, introduced as a part of legal decentralization initiatives, are designed to provide accessible, cost-effective, and timely justice to rural communities by resolving disputes in an informal, community-centered manner (Hossan & Islam, 2025).

Despite the Village Courts' potential to deliver justice, their effectiveness is often shaped by various challenges, including resource constraints, political influences, awareness gaps, and procedural limitations (Hossan, 2025). This study focuses on the Kamaria Union Parishad to examine the Village Court's role as a rural dispute resolution mechanism. By analyzing its methods, successes, and challenges, this research aims to explore how effectively the Village Court addresses community disputes, ensures justice, and contributes to social cohesion. The findings will provide insights into the strengths and weaknesses of this localized justice system and its overall impact on rural governance and conflict resolution (Hossan, 2025).

## Objectives

1. To assess the effectiveness and accessibility of the Village Court in addressing local disputes.
2. To identify challenges faced by the Village Court in fulfilling its dispute resolution functions
3. To suggest recommendations for strengthening the role of Union Parishads in rural dispute resolution.

## Literature Review

Bangladesh has a long and eventful tradition of the village courts system. The structure and functions of village courts have evolved in consonance with the socio-economic and political transformation of the country (Hossan, 2025). The government of Bangladesh evolved various laws, ordinances, and rules relating to the village courts system of the country. Apart from these different laws, ordinances, and regulations, a number of researchers and scholars from both Bangladesh and the West have examined how state-led formal courts and non-state informal courts operate.

Again, some international organizations like UNDP, World Bank, and DFID have developed different models in dispensing justice (Hossan & Islam, 2025). The process of delivering justice is connected to various factors, including the community's behavior in seeking justice, the power dynamics within rural society, the abilities and limitations of those responsible for dispensing justice, and the individuals engaged in the entire process. I will try to add here some important and relevant literature on the village court systems of Bangladesh (Hossan & Milon, 2025).

### **Overviewing Village Court Law 2006 (Amendment 2013, 2024)**

Dr. Sumaiya Khair (2014) provides a comprehensive overview of the alternative dispute resolution (ADR) systems in Bangladesh, emphasizing the role of community-based initiatives like Salish, informal mediation, and quasi-formal systems such as the village court. Khair highlights how these mechanisms serve as accessible and cost-effective options for resolving disputes in rural areas, especially for marginalized populations. However, the analysis primarily focuses on the general structure and implementation of these systems rather than on the specific role of Union Parishad in the process (Hossan & Milon, 2025).

Muhammad Rafiqul (2020) explores the historical origins and evolution of the Salish system, which is deeply rooted in traditional community practices. This study sheds light on how Salish operates as a customary dispute resolution mechanism, particularly in rural communities, where formal legal systems may be less accessible. Rafiqul's research highlights both the advantages and limitations of this informal system, such as its efficiency and cost-effectiveness, but also issues related to gender biases and fairness (Hossan, Milon & Ahmed, 2025).

Similarly, Bashir Ahmed and Mohammad Tarikul Islam (2013) delve into the quasi-formal dispute resolution processes facilitated by the Union Parishad, with a specific focus on village courts. Their work examines the operation, effectiveness, and challenges faced by Union Parishad in delivering justice through village courts. Ahmed and Islam highlight that village courts play a significant role in resolving minor disputes at the local level, reducing the burden on formal courts. However, they note challenges such as resource constraints, lack of awareness, and political influence that affect the effectiveness of the village court system (Sultan, Hossan & Huda, 2024).

While these studies provide valuable insights into the broader landscape of ADR mechanisms in rural Bangladesh, they do not specifically address the role of the Union Parishad in leading village courts and its overall significance in the dispute resolution process. The literature also lacks a critical evaluation of how the Union Parishad bridges the gap between informal community mechanisms like Salish and quasi-formal systems like village courts (Hossan, 2023).

In summary, existing research has explored alternative dispute resolution systems extensively, with specific emphasis on Salish and village courts. However, there remains a gap in understanding the distinct and pivotal role of the Union Parishad in facilitating, managing, and leading village court proceedings to ensure accessible justice at the local level. Further studies are necessary to analyze the Union

Parishad's contributions, limitations, and opportunities for improvement in the dispute resolution process (Hossan & Alom, 2024).

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Design**

The research adopts a qualitative case study approach to explore the role of the Union Parishad, specifically the Village Court in Kamaria Union Parishad, in resolving rural disputes. This design is suitable for gaining an in-depth understanding of social, legal, and institutional practices within their localized context. Through this approach, the study examines how Village Courts function in practice and their effectiveness in promoting justice and social harmony.

### **Study Area**

The study is conducted in Kamaria Union Parishad, located in a rural region of Bangladesh. The choice of this site is based on its active Village Court operations, which make it an appropriate case for evaluating the Union Parishad's role in rural dispute resolution. The area represents a typical rural administrative setting, providing valuable insights into the functioning and challenges of local justice mechanisms.

### **Data Sources**

The study utilizes both primary and secondary data sources:

- Primary Data: Collected through fieldwork, interviews, focus group discussions, and direct observation.
- Secondary Data: Obtained from official records, Union Parishad reports, government documents, policy papers, legal frameworks, and relevant academic literature.

### **Sampling Method**

A purposive sampling method is used to select participants directly involved in or affected by the Village Court system. The sample includes:

- Union Parishad chairperson and members
- Village Court officials (e.g., panel members)
- Complainants and respondents in selected dispute cases
- Local community members who have utilized the Village Court

Approximately 15–20 respondents are selected to ensure diversity of perspectives and representativeness of experiences.

### **Data Collection Methods**

To gather comprehensive information, multiple qualitative tools are employed:

- Semi-Structured Interviews: Conducted with UP officials, disputants, and court members to collect detailed narratives about dispute resolution practices.
- Focus Group Discussions (FGDs): Organized with community members to understand perceptions, satisfaction levels, and social impacts of Village Court decisions.

- Observation: Direct observation of Village Court proceedings to analyze processes, participation, and dynamics between parties.
- Document Review: Examination of Village Court records, case files, and relevant policy documents to understand procedural aspects and institutional outcomes.

### **Data Analysis**

The collected qualitative data are analyzed using thematic analysis. Key analytical steps include:

1. Transcribing recorded interviews and FGDs.
2. Coding the data to identify recurring themes such as accessibility, fairness, transparency, and effectiveness.
3. Comparing the findings with existing legal frameworks, policies, and secondary literature.

This process enables a deeper evaluation of the Union Parishad's contribution to rural dispute resolution and its alignment with national justice objectives.

### **Evaluation of Village Court (from a historical perspective)**

Men are social beings. They live in the society together, share all their pains and pleasures with each other. This society is created based on the cooperation of everyone else. It is assumed that the intimacy levels among villagers are much higher than those among city dwellers. Due to the high level of intimacy, there are many interactions (Hossan, 2024). Sometimes, interactions give rise to chaos, conflicts, unwanted disputes, and so on. Such disagreements may occur between neighbors, people from the same village, those from different villages, and even family members. Disputes can escalate into conflicts and riots, resulting in significant losses of money, manpower, and resources (Hossan, Sourav & Islam, 2024).

A plethora of studies have demonstrated how a minor quarrel between people or families can result in both parties entering the Pauperization process. However, resolving these kinds of disagreements at the outset within the community could assist them in evading harassment and losses. The current legal and judicial framework of Bangladesh primarily derives from two centuries of British colonial rule in the Indian subcontinent, although it also includes some elements from the pre-British era, rooted in Hindu and Muslim governance. Prior to the arrival of the British in the Indo-Pak subcontinent, there existed an ancient local governance institution known as the Village Panchayat. The expression “panchayet” denotes a gathering of five or more individuals (Banglapedia: Panchayat System).

In ancient times, the village assembly or panchayet, either appointed by the king or elected by villagers, was allowed to manage village administration without interference. The panchayets were composed in a way that ensured representation from various classes and castes. A key role of the panchayat was to handle minor judicial matters and resolve different conflicts among the villagers. During the early phase of British rule, the existing system of rural administration in Bengal was maintained. No judicial responsibilities were assigned to the local bodies (Quader, 1995: 1). Following the enactment of the Bengal Village Self-Government Act 1919, the term “Union Board” was assigned judicial responsibilities.

In the absence of established institutions, British colonial authorities began efforts to establish village-based courts and benches as per the Bengal Village Self-Government Act of 1919 (Banglapedia: 2006). The responsibility for handling minor offences and disputes at the village levels rested with these courts and benches, under the general oversight of elected local officials (chairmen) from village-based local bodies, specifically the union boards established by the same Act. In 1961, the Pakistani government issued the Conciliation Courts Ordinance, which mandated that the Courts address minor offences and civil cases as well.

To resolve minor criminal and civil disputes, the Bangladeshi government set up village courts in all unions in 1976. Village courts primarily aimed to resolve disputes amicably, rather than to ascertain guilt and mete out punishment. However, unfortunately, the absence of clear ideas, corrupt practices, non-cooperation among local government officials, and insufficient authority for local bodies have continued to impede the functioning of village courts and benches since their inception (Banglapedia: 2006).

Under the Basic Democracy Order of 1959 in Pakistan, local government bodies were established at four levels: Union Council at the Union level, Thana Council at the Thana level, District Council at the District level, and Divisional Council at the Divisional level. Unions typically encompassed regions with a population of around 10,000 people. The Union Council was made up of 10 to 15 members, with two-thirds elected by the electorate and one-third appointed by the government. Following the introduction of the constitution, the system of nomination was abolished.

The members would choose a chairman and one vice chairman from among themselves. Alongside their duty of ensuring law and order in their area, the Union Council was assigned 37 functions, which included agriculture development, water supply, education, communications, and social welfare. It was also within the Union Council's powers to establish a conciliation court, and under the Muslim Family and Marriage Ordinance of 1961, its members were endowed with judicial authority. The Union Council was granted the authority under the Basic Democracies Ordinance of 1959 to levy taxes on property and other sources to create its own fund, in addition to the existing Chowkidari fund.

A government grant was awarded for the rural works programme and the establishment of the Union Parishad office. The Union Board continued to function, with various partial modifications, until the Basic Democratic Order of 1959 was introduced, which renamed it the Union Council (Quader, 1995). Nonetheless, this Order did not confer any judicial authority on Union Councils. Subsequently, in 1961, the President of Pakistan issued the "Conciliation Courts Ordinance," which authorized the Union Council to handle minor civil and criminal cases (Quader, 1995: 1). The Union Council maintained its judicial functions until Bangladesh's liberation in 1971. Following the independence in December 1971, the government of Bangladesh issued President's Order 7 in 1972, which dissolved all existing local government bodies and appointed specific committees to carry out the functions of these defunct entities. Furthermore, the Union Council's name was altered to Union Panchayet (which was later renamed Union Parishad) (Banglapedia). The Local Government Ordinance was promulgated by the Government of

Bangladesh in 1976. This Ordinance assigned forty functions, including some limited judicial duties, to the Union Parishad.

### **Village Court**

A Village Court is a local judicial body in Bangladesh designed to provide an accessible, efficient, and cost-effective platform for resolving minor civil and criminal disputes within rural communities. Established under the Village Courts Act, 2006, these courts operate at the Union Parishad (the smallest rural administrative unit) level, aiming to deliver prompt justice and alleviate the burden on higher courts.

### **Characteristics of Village Courts**

- Village courts of Bangladesh were established by The Village Court Act, 2006 (previously The Village Court Ordinance 1976).
- Village Courts located in the Union Parishad Complex.
- Both Civil and Criminal cases are tried by the VC
- VC has limited jurisdiction of a fine of up to 3,00000 Taka.
- VC comprises of five members UP chairman, two UP members, and two persons selected from both parties.
- Magistrate 1st class/ Assistant Judge is the appellate authority

This court is legally required to follow the informal procedure of trial or dispute settlement, meaning thereby that the application of the Code of Civil Procedure, Code of Criminal Procedure, and Evidence. The act has been barred. It has barred the appointment of lawyers. However, decisions of these courts are as binding as those of any other formal courts of the country

### **Village Courts Act, 2006**

Enacted to formalize the operation of Village Courts, the Village Courts Act, 2006, outlines their structure, jurisdiction, and procedures. The Act emphasizes alternative dispute resolution methods, encouraging amicable settlements and fostering social harmony in rural areas.



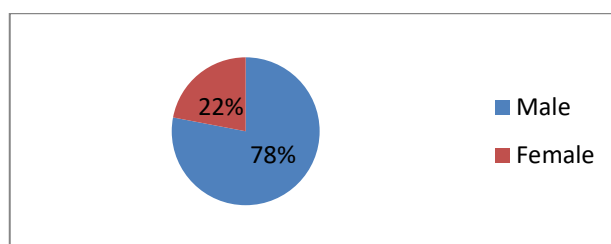
A Village Court in Bangladesh, established under the Village Court Act of 2006, is composed of five members: the Chairman of the Union Parishad (UP), who serves as the chairman of the court, and four nominated members, two selected by each disputing party, with the condition that one member from each party must be a member of the UP. If the UP Chairman is unable to perform duties or if their neutrality is questioned, another UP member may act as chairman. The Village Court

has authority over approximately thirty minor criminal offences under Part I of the Act's schedule, including unlawful assembly, riot, voluntarily causing hurt, mischief, criminal trespass, affray, wrongful restraint and confinement, criminal intimidation, insult intended to provoke breach of peace, misconduct in public by drunken persons, theft, criminal breach of trust, cheating, cattle trespass, and offences under the Cattle Trespass Act of 1871, among others. Under Part II of the schedule, the court can also handle civil suits related to recovery of money or property, compensation for damages to movable or immovable property, cattle trespass, and wages of agricultural laborers. The Village Court follows an informal procedure for settlement, where the application of the Code of Civil Procedure, the Code of Criminal Procedure, and the Evidence Act is excluded, and lawyers are not permitted to appear. Nevertheless, decisions of the Village Court are legally binding like those of formal courts. As per Section 7 of the Act, the court can award compensation up to Tk 25,000 for offences, penalize contempt of court up to Tk 500 (Sec. 11), and recover compensation through the Public Demands Recovery Act, 1913 (Sec. 9). It can also reject applications on reasonable grounds, refer cases of public interest to Magistrate Courts, and must submit half-yearly case reports to the Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO). Subsequent amendments have expanded its authority: the 2013 amendment increased the financial jurisdiction to Tk 75,000, while the Village Courts (Amendment) Act, 2024 raised it further to Tk 300,000 and introduced provisions to address procedural delays by allowing absent members seven days to attend and authorizing the chairman to cast a deciding vote to resolve deadlocks.

### Data Analysis, Discussion, and Findings

The research monograph is based on the topic of the role of the Union Parishad's Village Court in dispute resolution of a certain Union Parishad in Sherpur District. In this research monograph, 50 respondents' data have been used, including 5 elected Union Parishad representatives, belonging to different villages of Kamaria Union Parishad.

### Demographic Information of the Study

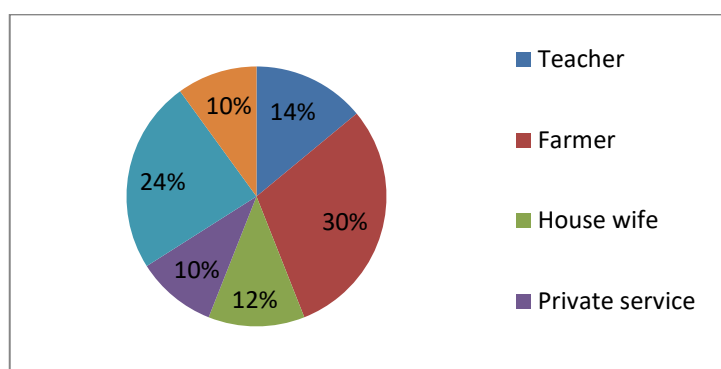


**Figure 2:** Gender Distribution

The figure shows the information about the respondents. There are 50 respondents. According to the table, the respondents are 78% male and 22% are female. They are all older than 20 years. There are 5 elected Union Parishad's elected representatives. One of them is the chairman, and the others are members. Occupation

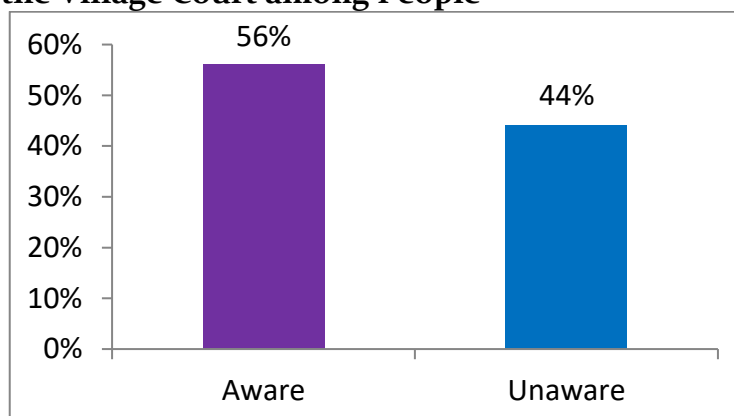
| Occupation              | Respondents | Percentage % |
|-------------------------|-------------|--------------|
| Teacher                 | 7           | 14           |
| Farmer                  | 15          | 30           |
| House wife              | 6           | 12           |
| Private service         | 5           | 10           |
| Student                 | 12          | 24           |
| Elected representatives | 5           | 10           |

They hold various profession for instance teacher, farmer, businessmen, private service, student, elected representatives, house wife.



**Figure 3: Occupation of Respondents**

#### Awareness of the Village Court among People



**Figure 4: Awareness of Village Court among People**

It is a matter of great sorrow that most of the respondents do not know about the Village Court and its activities. 44% people do not know about it. Even many of them have never listen the term before. Only 56 % people are aware of it. Though few people know, many of them don't know about its activity clearly. Because of not enough dissemination from the concerned authority and the Union Parishad. That's why the people of this Union try to solve disputes through other alternatives.

## Approach The Village Court for Dispute Resolution

**Figure 5: Approach to The Village Court**

Among the respondents who are aware of Village Court, only 12% people have experience to approach VC. There was a question whether you have ever approached the VC for dispute resolution. The data indicates that a significant majority, 88% of people, do not approach the village court, suggesting a lack of engagement or trust in this institution.

### Number of Cases Lodged in the VC

From January 2024 to November 2024, there were 88 cases lodged. 42 cases were finally stalled, and 30 cases are still pending. There are various disputes happen but the people of the Union do not approach the court much. They try to resolve their disputes through Salish or another way. The people of the Union approach the court; their number is very few. It is clear from the table.

Nature of Disputes Lodged in the VC



**Figure 6: Natures of Disputes**

Respondents of the study area are reported to be experiencing various types of disputes, which can be broadly divided into civil disputes and criminal offences. Data relating to the types have been presented in a figure. It appears from the figure that more than 55% disputes/offences reported are civil offences rest of the offences are criminal in nature. Among the criminal offences, various main types of offences involved were: fight/quarrel, family conflict, violence against women, physical assault, etc. Among the civil cases, property-related disputes mainly involved land occupation, demarcation, and selling and purchasing, etc.

## Disposal of The Cases

In this study, 6 respondents were asked about the disposal of cases lodged in the village courts, among them 3 were petitioners and another 3 were opponents. 2 respondents lodged cases before 6 months ago, while another 4 of them lodged the cases one year ago. 3 respondents said that their cases were disposed of within three months, 3 took more than three months, and the rest of the cases took four months or above. It seems from the study that 50% of the cases took more than four months, which is not in the spirit of the Village Courts Act, 2006.

## Facing Complexities to Get Justice from the Village Court



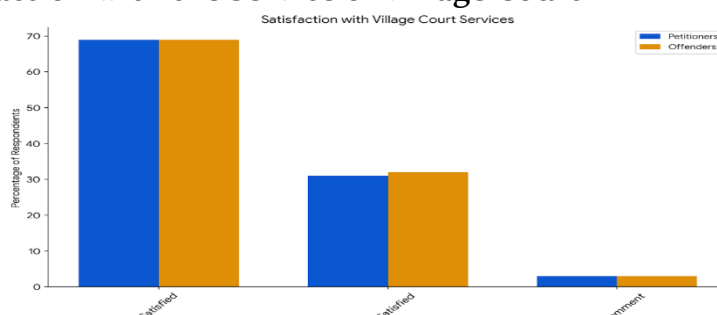
**Figure 7:** Complexities Faced by Respondents

In the chart, the study found that 66.7% respondents had not faced any complexities in getting justice from the village court, especially in this union. 27.8% respondents were faces complexitie to case file. The chairman always attempts to resolve the case during the salish. But most of the cases remain without any arbitration. 5.6% respondent did not give any comments on it.

## Types of judgment

The most frequent type of judgment of disputes in the VCs is the compromise or mediation. Among the 10 respondents, 6 said their cases were compromised after mediation among the parties. Two of the respondents said they have been referred to the higher courts because their case was beyond the jurisdiction of the VC. The rest of the cases were settled by the return of borrowed money to the petitioners from the opponents.

## Satisfaction with the Service of Village Court



**Figure 8:** Satisfaction with The Service of Village Court

The chart shows that the respondents were asked whether they are or are not satisfied with the service of the village courts. Over one-half of the respondents (69%) among the petitioners and offenders of the village court replied that they are satisfied with the service provided by the VC. 31% of respondents indicated that they are

dissatisfied with the service provided by village courts. It is crucial to mention that dissatisfied respondents appear to have trouble registering their case. The chairman attempts to solve the issue at the Salish session. 3% respondents were unwilling to give any comment on the question.

### **Challenges Faced by the Village Court**

25% respondents seem to indicate that VC faces a lack of resources challenge. From them, 35% says that political interference. It is the highest percentage that respondents say. Then 20% seems lack trained personalities, 17% low community awareness. And the rest say other challenges that the Village Court faces. There are general people and also elected representatives of this Union Parishad.

### **Lack of Competencies of the UP officials**

The UP Chairman, secretary, and UP members who are entitled to settle the dispute of the rural people under the Village Court Act, 2006, should have a considerable level of education and knowledge about the Court procedure, which is favourable in dispensing justice. Most of the UP officials lack training, machinery, and understanding of the legal rules, court procedure, and how to ensure natural justice. For lack of understanding of what it means to make a complete record and how to keep records, the record management of the village courts is woefully poor.

### **Village Court: An Unfunded Mandate on Local Governments**

Village Court outside the project area has not received any funds from the Local Government Ministry or from the Upazila Parishad. It was also observed that outside the project area, all VC runs without a full-time court assistant, and the UP secretary usually performs this task, who thinks that it is beyond their ordinary job descriptions. As part of their duties in the Union Parishad, the chairman and members also serve in the Village Court. But considering their overall responsibilities as members and chairmen of the Union Parishads, their salary or honorarium is too low. It was also observed that the resources and facilities in the project-aided courts have a positive effect on the quality of justice dispensed. The UP chairmen and members are interested in performing judicial activities that by law are vested in them, but at the same time, in the absence of government-sponsored project intervention or NGO initiatives, they cannot perform them.

### **Major Findings and Observation**

Village courts have emerged as a significant mechanism for dispute resolution in rural areas, particularly in developing countries. Research studies have highlighted several key findings regarding their effectiveness and impact:

### **Accessibility and Affordability**

Village Courts in Bangladesh provide a more accessible and affordable alternative to the formal legal system. These courts are situated within or near rural communities, significantly reducing travel costs and saving time for litigants. Their procedures are straightforward and informal, which helps minimize

legal fees and administrative expenses. As a result, rural residents, especially those with limited financial means, can seek justice without the economic burdens commonly associated with formal judicial processes.

### **Local Knowledge and Cultural Sensitivity**

Members of Village Courts often possess a deep understanding of local customs, traditions, and social norms, enabling them to handle disputes within a culturally relevant framework. This local insight allows the courts to tailor dispute resolution processes to the specific context of the community, enhancing trust and cooperation among disputing parties. The cultural sensitivity embedded in these proceedings helps ensure that resolutions are both socially acceptable and practically implementable, maintaining harmony within the community.

### **Speedy Resolution and Reduced Backlogs**

One of the key advantages of Village Courts is their ability to resolve disputes quickly and efficiently. Because their procedures are simplified and accessible, they can manage a larger number of cases compared to formal courts, thereby reducing case backlogs. Timely resolution also prevents disputes from escalating into major conflicts, contributing to the preservation of peace and social stability in rural areas.

### **Community Empowerment and Participation**

Village Courts promote community empowerment by involving local residents directly in the justice process. This participatory approach encourages community members to take ownership of dispute resolution and fosters accountability within local governance. Such engagement strengthens social cohesion, enhances mutual trust among villagers, and helps prevent future conflicts through collective responsibility and awareness (Hossan, Islam & Khatun, 2023).

### **Limitations and Challenges**

Despite their benefits, Village Courts face several limitations and challenges. They often lack adequate legal expertise, training, and logistical resources, which can result in inconsistent or legally unsound decisions. Issues of impartiality and fairness may arise, particularly in cases involving influential community members or local elites. Moreover, the effectiveness of Village Courts varies depending on leadership quality, community participation, and the level of institutional support from government and non-governmental organizations.

### **Recommendations**

The study identified the related barriers and problems with the Village Court Act and assessed the effectiveness and performance of the court in serving the service seekers to uphold justice. During the study, respondents were asked to mention the factors affecting the dispensation of justice. The respondents mentioned a series of factors that act as barriers in dispensing justice through the VC. From the field survey analysis, FGD, and KII, the following recommendations may be considered as tools for activating the Village Court:

The jurisdiction of the project area needs to be increased in case of the village court.

- The law enforcement authority must support the village court report concerning criminal cases.
- Village Court needs to take all cases of its jurisdiction before lodging a case at the Police Station.
- To arrange a training workshop about the trial process for the UP Chairman, Members, and officials.
- Increasing the government and private mass media publicity and campaigning about the village court for public awareness.
- Appointing manpower to assist with secretarial activities.
- Provide logistics support for conducting trial procedures.
- To reform village court laws in taking legal steps against persons of contempt and providing assistance from the law enforcement authority

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study aimed to assess the effectiveness of the Village Court system in promoting access to justice in one selected Union Parishad in Sherpur, Bangladesh. According to the study's findings, the Village Court system could enhance access to justice at the grassroots level, especially for women and the impoverished, who frequently face exclusion from the formal justice system due to factors like high costs and lack of awareness. The Village Court system offers a cost-effective and efficient alternative to the formal justice system, which is marred by inefficiencies and corruption. Nonetheless, the research underscores various difficulties that must be tackled to guarantee the Village Court system's effectiveness and sustainability. These include a lack of awareness among rural people, inexperience of UP officials who are not sufficiently conversant with the system, and a lack of attention from concerned authorities at the field level. The research suggests revising the Village Court Act in order to expand its jurisdiction and user fee. It also recommends implementing ongoing oversight and coordination involving UP officials, police, UNOs, judiciary members, and service users. In addition, the research indicates that the government should dedicate more resources to bolster and advocate for the Village Court system and local government institutions aimed at preventing and resolving local conflicts. There is a lack of political commitment to strengthening the local government, which is interconnected with the Village Court system. The research emphasizes the importance of the Village Court system continuing to operate, not just for providing low-cost, low-trouble access to justice, but also for preserving peace and harmony in rural communities. In summary, the research indicates that the Village Court system could enhance access to justice in Bangladesh's rural regions. However, effective monitoring and oversight, legal education, and adequate resources are necessary for the system's effectiveness and sustainability. The findings and recommendations of this study are expected to enhance the Village Court system and foster universal access to justice in Bangladesh.

## Conflict of Interest

This research article is free of conflicting interests regarding authorship and publication.

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We have not taken any funds for conducting the research.

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